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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Patent No. 7,411,041 :
Chirica et al. : DECISION DISMISSING
Application No. 10/667290 : REQUEST FOR
Issue Date: August 12, 2008 : RECONSIDERATION OF
Filed: September 18, 2003 : PATENT TERM ADJUSTMENT
Attorney Docket No. ELN-002 : UNDER 37 CFR 1.705(d)

This is a decision on the "REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF PATENT TERM ADJUSTMENT UNDER 37 CFR §1.705(d)," filed October 10, 2008, requesting that the patent term adjustment determination for the above-identified patent be changed from six hundred seventy-two (672) days to nine hundred ninety-six (996) days.

The request for reconsideration is granted to the extent that the determination has been reconsidered; however, the request for reconsideration of patent term adjustment is DISMISSED with respect to making any change in the patent adjustment determination under 35 U.S.C. § 154(b) of 672 days.

BACKGROUND

On August 12, 2008, the application matured into U.S. Patent No. 7,411,041, with a revised patent term adjustment of 672 days. On October 10, 2008, patentees timely submitted this request for reconsideration of patent term adjustment (with required fee), asserting that the correct number of days of Patent Term Adjustment is 996 days.

STATUTE AND REGULATION

35 U.S.C. § 154(b) as amended by § 4402 of the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999¹ (AIPA) provides that:

ADJUSTMENT OF PATENT TERM. —**(1) PATENT TERM GUARANTEES. —**

(A) GUARANTEE OF PROMPT PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE RESPONSES. — Subject to the limitations under paragraph (2), if the issue of an original patent is delayed due to the failure of the Patent and Trademark Office to —

(i) provide at least one of the notifications under section 132 of this title or a notice of allowance under section 151 of this title not later than 14 months after —

(I) the date on which an application was filed under section 111(a) of this title; or

(II) the date on which an international application fulfilled the requirements of section 371 of this title;

(ii) respond to a reply under section 132, or to an appeal taken under section 134, within 4 months after the date on which the reply was filed or the appeal was taken;

(iii) act on an application within 4 months after the date of a decision by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences under section 134 or 135 or a decision by a Federal court under section 141, 145, or 146 in a case in which allowable claims remain in the application; or

(iv) issue a patent within 4 months after the date on which the issue fee was paid under section 151 and all outstanding requirements were satisfied, the term of the patent shall be extended 1 day for each day after the end of the period specified in clause (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv), as the case may be, until the action described in such clause is taken.

(B) GUARANTEE OF NO MORE THAN 3-YEAR APPLICATION PENDENCY. — Subject to the limitations under paragraph (2), if the issue of an original patent is delayed due to the failure of the United States Patent and Trademark Office to issue a patent within 3 years after the actual filing date of the application in the United States, not including —

¹ Public Law 106-113, 113 Stat. 1501, 1501A-557 through 1501A-560 (1999).

(i) any time consumed by continued examination of the application requested by the applicant under section 132(b);

(ii) any time consumed by a proceeding under section 135(a), any time consumed by the imposition of an order under section 181, or any time consumed by appellate review by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or by a Federal court; or

(iii) any delay in the processing of the application by the United States Patent and Trademark Office requested by the applicant except as permitted by paragraph (3)(C), the term of the patent shall be extended 1 day for each day after the end of that 3-year period until the patent is issued.

(C) GUARANTEE OR ADJUSTMENTS FOR DELAYS DUE TO INTERFERENCES, SECRECY ORDERS, AND APPEALS. — Subject to the limitations under paragraph (2), if the issue of an original patent is delayed due to —

(i) a proceeding under section 135(a);

(ii) the imposition of an order under section 181; or

(iii) appellate review by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or by a Federal court in a case in which the patent was issued under a decision in the review reversing an adverse determination of patentability, the term of the patent shall be extended 1 day for each day of the pendency of the proceeding, order, or review, as the case may be.

(2) LIMITATIONS. —

(A) IN GENERAL. — To the extent that periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in paragraph (1) overlap, the period of any adjustment granted under this subsection shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed.

The implementing regulation, **37 CFR § 1.702**, provides grounds for adjustment of patent term due to examination delay under the Patent Term Guarantee Act of 1999 (original applications, other than designs, filed on or after May 29, 2000).

(a) Failure to take certain actions within specified time frames. Subject to the provisions of 35 U.S.C. 154(b) and this subpart, the term of an original patent shall be

adjusted if the issuance of the patent was delayed due to the failure of the Office to:

(1) Mail at least one of a notification under 35 U.S.C. 132 or a notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151 not later than fourteen months after the date on which the application was filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) or fulfilled the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 371 in an international application;

(2) Respond to a reply under 35 U.S.C. 132 or to an appeal taken under 35 U.S.C. 134 not later than four months after the date on which the reply was filed or the appeal was taken;

(3) Act on an application not later than four months after the date of a decision by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences under 35 U.S.C. 134 or 135 or a decision by a Federal court under 35 U.S.C. 141, 145, or 146 where at least one allowable claim remains in the application; or

(4) Issue a patent not later than four months after the date on which the issue fee was paid under 35 U.S.C. 151 and all outstanding requirements were satisfied.

(b) Failure to issue a patent within three years of the actual filing date of the application. Subject to the provisions of 35 U.S.C. 154(b) and this subpart, the term of an original patent shall be adjusted if the issuance of the patent was delayed due to the failure of the Office to issue a patent within three years after the date on which the application was filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) or the national stage commenced under 35 U.S.C. 371(b) or (f) in an international application, but not including²:

In pertinent part, 37 CFR § 1.703 provides for calculation of the periods, as follows:

Period of adjustment of patent term due to examination delay.

(a) The period of adjustment under § 1.702(a) is the sum of the following periods:

² (1) Any time consumed by continued examination of the application under 35 U.S.C. 132(b);
(2) Any time consumed by an interference proceeding under 35 U.S.C. 135(a);
(3) Any time consumed by the imposition of a secrecy order under 35 U.S.C. 181;
(4) Any time consumed by review by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or a Federal court; or
(5) Any delay in the processing of the application by the Office that was requested by the applicant.

(1) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the day after the date that is fourteen months after the date on which the application was filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) or fulfilled the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 371 and ending on the date of mailing of either an action under 35 U.S.C. 132, or a notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151, whichever occurs first;

(2) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the day after the date that is four months after the date a reply under § 1.111 was filed and ending on the date of mailing of either an action under 35 U.S.C. 132, or a notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151, whichever occurs first;

(3) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the day after the date that is four months after the date a reply in compliance with § 1.113(c) was filed and ending on the date of mailing of either an action under 35 U.S.C. 132, or a notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151, whichever occurs first;

(4) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the day after the date that is four months after the date an appeal brief in compliance with § 41.37 of this title was filed and ending on the date of mailing of any of an examiner's answer under § 41.39 of this title, an action under 35 U.S.C. 132, or a notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151, whichever occurs first;

(5) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the day after the date that is four months after the date of a final decision by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or by a Federal court in an appeal under 35 U.S.C. 141 or a civil action under 35 U.S.C. 145 or 146 where at least one allowable claim remains in the application and ending on the date of mailing of either an action under 35 U.S.C. 132 or a notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151, whichever occurs first; and

(6) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the day after the date that is four months after the date the issue fee was paid and all outstanding requirements were satisfied and ending on the date a patent was issued.

(b) The period of adjustment under § 1.702(b) is the number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the day after the date that is three years after the date on which

the application was filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) or the national stage commenced under 35 U.S.C. 371(b) or (f) in an international application and ending on the date a patent was issued, but not including the sum of the following periods³:

37 CFR 1.703(f) provides that:

The adjustment will run from the expiration date of the patent as set forth in 35 U.S.C. 154(a)(2). To the extent that periods of delay attributable to the grounds specified in §1.702 overlap, the period of adjustment granted under this section shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed. The term of a patent entitled to adjustment under § 1.702 and this section shall be adjusted for the sum of the periods calculated under paragraphs (a) through (e) of this section, to the extent that such periods are not overlapping, less the sum of the periods calculated under § 1.704. The date indicated on any certificate of mailing or transmission under § 1.8 shall not be taken into account in this calculation.

³ (1) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the date on which a request for continued examination of the application under 35 U.S.C. 132(b) was filed and ending on the date the patent was issued;

(2)(i) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the date an interference was declared or redeclared to involve the application in the interference and ending on the date that the interference was terminated with respect to the application; and (ii) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the date prosecution in the application was suspended by the Office due to interference proceedings under 35 U.S.C. 135(a) not involving the application and ending on the date of the termination of the suspension;

(3)(i) The number of days, if any, the application was maintained in a sealed condition under 35 U.S.C. 181; (ii) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the date of mailing of an examiner's answer under § 41.39 of this title in the application under secrecy order and ending on the date the secrecy order was removed; (iii) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the date applicant was notified that an interference would be declared but for the secrecy order and ending on the date the secrecy order was removed; and (iv) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the date of notification under § 5.3(c) of this chapter and ending on the date of mailing of the notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151; and,

(4) The number of days, if any, in the period beginning on the date on which a notice of appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences was filed under 35 U.S.C. 134 and § 41.31 of this title and ending on the date of the last decision by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or by a Federal court in an appeal under 35 U.S.C. 141 or a civil action under 35 U.S.C. 145, or on the date of mailing of either an action under 35 U.S.C. 132, or a notice of allowance under 35 U.S.C. 151, whichever occurs first, if the appeal did not result in a decision by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences.

OPINION

The application matured into U.S. patent No. 7,411,041, on August 12, 2008, with a revised patent term adjustment of six hundred seventy-two (672) days. Patentees argue that the determination of 672 days remains in error in that pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 154(b) the Office failed to issue a patent within three years of the actual filing date of the above-referenced application in accordance with 37 CFR § 1.702(b) and failed to take certain action(s) into account, and within the time frames specified in 37 CFR § 1.702(a), as interpreted in Wyeth et al. v. Dudas, 580 F. Supp. 2d 138, 88 U.S.P.Q. 2d 1538 (D.D.C. 2008).

Specifically, patentees argue for an additional period of delay under § 154(b)(1)(B) from the day after the date that is three years after filing the application (September 19, 2006) and ending on the date that the first RCE was filed (September 21, 2007), or 368 days.

Patentees next assert that the Office delay of 713 days by decision mailed July 7, 2008⁴, overlaps with the period of delay of 368 days under § 154(b)(1)(B), by 44 days. Specifically, Patentees assert a period of overlap beginning on the date that is fourteen months after the date on which the application was filed (September 18, 2003), and ending on the date of mailing of the Restriction Requirement mailed November 1, 2006, overlaps the period of delay beginning on the day after the date that is three years after filing the application (September 19, 2006), and ending with the filing of the first RCE (September 21, 2007), by 44 days. Removing this overlap, the resulting non-overlap period of delay under § 154(b)(1)(A) is 669 (713 - 44) days.

Patentees do not contest the period of Applicant delay of 41 days by decision mailed July 7, 2008⁵.

⁴ The decision agreed with Applicants calculation of Office delay of 713 days under 37 CFR 1.703(a)(1) beginning on the date that is fourteen months after the date on which the application was filed (September 18, 2003), and ending on the date of mailing of the Restriction Requirement mailed November 1, 2006, and not based upon a Restriction Requirement mailed May 15, 2006, said mailing having been vacated by the Examiner.

⁵ The decision included Applicant delay of 41 days under 37 CFR 1.702(c)(10).

The sum of the non-overlapping delays as calculated by Patentees, therefore, is 669 + 368 = 1037 days.

The Office agrees that the RCE was filed 368 days from the day after the date that is three years after filing the application. However, the Office does not agree that the delay of 713 days should be offset by 44 days, or that patentees should accrue an additional period of delay under § 154(b)(1)(B) of 368 days. At issue is whether patentees should accrue 368 days of patent term adjustment under § 154(b)(1)(B) and whether the 713 days of patent term adjustment under 37 CFR 1.703(a)(1) should be offset by 44 days of overlap.

The Office does not agree and contends that both periods of 368 days and 44 days overlap. Patentees' interpretation of the period of overlap has been considered and found to be incorrect. Patentees' calculation of the period of overlap is inconsistent with the Office's interpretation of this provision. 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) limits the adjustment of patent term, as follows:

to the extent that the periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in paragraph (1) overlap, the period of any adjustment granted under this subsection shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed.

Likewise, 37 CFR 1.703(f) provides that:

To the extent that periods of delay attributable to the grounds specified in §1.702 overlap, the period of adjustment granted under this section shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed.

As explained in *Explanation of 37 CFR 1.703(f) and of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A)*, 69 Fed. Reg. 34283 (June 21, 2004), the Office interprets 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) as permitting either patent term adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(A)(i)-(iv), or patent term adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), but not as permitting patent term adjustment under both 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(A)(i)-(iv) and 154(b)(1)(B). Accordingly, the Office implements the overlap provision as follows:

If an application is entitled to an adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), the entire period during which the application was pending (except for periods excluded under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B)(i)-(iii)), and not just the period beginning three years after the actual filing date of the application, is the period of delay under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B) in determining whether periods of delay overlap under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A). Thus, any days of delay for Office issuance of the patent more than 3 years after the filing date of the application, which overlap with the days of patent term adjustment accorded prior to the issuance of the patent will not result in any additional patent term adjustment. See 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A), and 37 CFR § 1.703(f). See *Changes to Implement Patent Term Adjustment Under Twenty Year Term; Final Rule*, 65 Fed. Reg. 54366 (Sept. 18, 2000). See also *Revision of Patent Term Extension and Patent Term Adjustment Provisions; Final Rule*, 69 Fed. Reg. 21704 (April 22, 2004), 1282 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 100 (May 18, 2004). See also *Explanation of 37 CFR 1.703(f) and of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A)*, 69 Fed. Reg. 34283 (June 21, 2004).

The current wording of § 1.703(f) was revised in response to the misinterpretation of this provision by a number of applicants. The rule was slightly revised to more closely track the corresponding language of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A). The relevant portion differs only to the extent that the statute refers back to provisions of the statute whereas the rule refers back to sections of the rule. This was not a substantive change to the rule nor did it reflect a change of the Office's interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A). As stated in the *Explanation of 37 CFR 1.703(f) and of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A)*, the Office has consistently taken the position that if an application is entitled to an adjustment under the three-year pendency provision of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), the entire period during which the application was pending before the Office (except for periods excluded under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B)(i)-(iii)), and not just the period beginning three years after the actual filing date of the application, is the relevant period under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B) in determining whether periods of delay "overlap" under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A).

This interpretation is consistent with the statute. Taken together the statute and rule provide that to the extent that periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1) and in corresponding §1.702 overlap, the period of adjustment granted shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed. The grounds specified in these sections cover the A) guarantee of prompt Patent and Trademark Office responses, B) guarantee of no more than 3 year application pendency, and C) guarantee or adjustments for delays due to interference, secrecy orders and appeals. A section by section analysis of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) specifically provides that:

Section 4402 imposes limitations on restoration of term. In general, pursuant to [35 U.S.C.] 154(b)(2)(A)-(C), total adjustments granted for restorations under [35 U.S.C. 154](b)(1) are reduced as follows: (1) To the extent that there are multiple grounds for extending the term of a patent that may exist simultaneously (e.g., delay due to a secrecy order under [35 U.S.C.] 181 and administrative delay under [35 U.S.C.] 154(b)(1)(A)), the term should not be extended for each ground of delay but only for the actual number of days that the issuance of a patent was delayed; See 145 Cong. Rec. S14,718⁶

As such, the period for over 3 year pendency does not as argued by patentees overlap only to the extent that the actual dates in the period beginning three years after the date on which the application was filed overlap with the actual dates in the periods for failure of the Office to take action within specified time frames. In other words, consideration of the overlap does not begin three years after the filing date of the application.

In this instance, the relevant period under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B) in determining whether periods of delay "overlap" under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) is the period beginning on the filing date of the application, September 18, 2003, and ending on the date of filing of the first request for continued examination (RCE) on September 21, 2007. 713 days of patent

⁶ The AIPA is title IV of the Intellectual Property and Communications Omnibus Reform Act of 1999 (S. 1948), which was incorporated and enacted as law as part of Pub. L. 106-113. The Conference Report for H.R. 3194, 106th Cong. 1st Sess. (1999), which resulted in Pub. L. 106-113, does not contain any discussion (other than the incorporated language) of S. 1948. A section-by-section analysis of S. 1948, however, was printed in the Congressional Record at the request of Senator Lott, See 145 Cong. Rec. S14,708-26 (1999) (daily ed. Nov. 17, 1999).

term adjustment were accorded prior to the filing of the request for continued examination for the Office failing to respond within specified time frames during the pendency of the application. All of these 713 days overlap with the 368 of patent term adjustment under 37 CFR 1.702(b). Accordingly, at issuance, the Office properly entered zero (0) additional days of patent term adjustment for the Office taking in excess of 3 years to issue the patent.

In view thereof, the Office affirms that the revised determination of patent term adjustment at the time of the issuance of the patent is 672 days (713 - 41).

CONCLUSION

The Office acknowledges that patentees previously submitted the \$200 fee set forth in §1.18(e). No additional fees are required.

Telephone inquiries specific to this matter should be directed to Attorney Derek Woods, at (571) 272-3232.



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